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ABSTRACT

A pre- and posttest academic year longitudinal design was used to document the early transition experience of adult women entering or returning to college who differ along motivational dimensions and expectations. In 1981 and 1982, two cohorts of volunteer subjects were recruited from Fordham University's EXCEL program, a special entry program for adults leading to a bachelor of arts degree. A combined sample of 61 women was administered the California Q-set, Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS), and College Transition Inventory. Women were classified according to career goal focus as integrators (focused career goals) and seekers (unfocused career goals). Personality profiles of integrators and seekers were surprisingly similar. Differences on Q-items gave integrators an advantage in a college environment. Subscale scores of the TSCS showed that the two groups were different at the time of college entrance, integrators had higher mean scores, and during the first year of transition, the gap widened. Academic performance for both groups over a 2-year period was above average. At the end of their first year most women had positive attitudes about their college experience. No significant difference in persistence existed between the two groups. (Data tables are appended.) (YLB)

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THE CAREER GOALS OF REENTRY WOMEN:

A NOT SO HIDDEN AGENDA

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The increased attendance of reentry women students (those who enter the postsecondary educational system as adults, generally 25 and over) has played a major role in the changing demographics of college enrollment. By 1980 almost one-third of all college students were older than 25 years of age; two-thirds of this population (or over three million adult learners) were women (Fisher-Thompson & Kuhn, 1981; Vance & Eiden, 1981). Projections for future enrollments indicate this trend will persist and possibly accelerate (Carnegie Council, 1980, NCES, 1985).

This study concerns the experience of women reentering the educational system during the initial period of adjustment from the time just prior to college entrance to the end of their first academic year. The study is set within an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and considers the concepts of trajectory and transition that are central themes in contemporary studies of life course dynamics (Elder, 1985). Life transitions (e.g., divorce, job changes, empty nest) often provide an incentive to return to college (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980). College entrance itself marks a time of change that gives an adult woman's life a new shape and direction. The developmental importance of ecological transitions derives from the fact that they invariably involve a change in role (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, Cross, 1981). As students, these women will face different demands and expectations and others will respond to them in new ways. By their nature role transitions pose potential challenges since they disrupt established patterns of behavior and require personal adjustment (George, 1980).

Traditionally, beginning college has been an age-graded life event; it usually follows a normative timetable. The timing of an event refers to its congruence with personal and societal expectations of when it "should" occur. The conditions surrounding the adult woman student who is "off time" may make it difficult for her to use the normal channels of communication and support. We would expect the incentive features of the college environment to impact on the experience of reentry women directly in terms of their adaptation to the student role. However, we must also recognize that these women face and present challenges that are different from those of traditional college students. The roles they perform are more complex and varied; often they have commitments to full-time jobs and/or families.

There is recent evidence that the characteristics of adult women seeking formal education may be changing. Whereas women in the 1960s were concerned with making the initial move from homemaking to paid employment, women today are couching their decision to return to college in terms of selecting "a more appropriate, satisfying or promising career path" (Campbell, 1981 cited by Ekstrom & Marvel, 1985). The changing roles of women are reflected by their increased presence in undergraduate education, greater participation in the labor force, and investment in graduate and professional training. The question for women today is no longer "family or career?" but how to combine family, education, and career. The new profile of reentry women has important implications for program development. Although an agenda for career may not be the only factor motivating women to return to college, we cannot afford to ignore that such a factor is operative. Nor can we expect that women who return to college are similar with respect to direction or commitment in the pursuit of career goals. Those interested in program design for this emerging student

population need to understand the internal and external factors in women's lives that play a part in making this transition.

The purpose of this study is to provide teachers, counselors, and administrators in higher education with a description of the personal characteristics of women who differ along motivational dimensions and expectations in beginning or returning to college. An inquiry will be made to determine what psychological changes, if any, occur in the lives of women who are making this transition as adults. Because they are entering a new setting (college) and adopting a new role (student), change does seem likely as a general rule, but it is probably more accurate to assume that women who differ in orientation may respond differently to the college experience.

After considering the personal attributes of reentry women, attention will be focused on their experience in the college setting. Issues that concern their integration as students by the end of their first year in college will be addressed, e.g., successful academic performance and satisfaction with their experience in college. It seems likely that women who are distinguishable on the basis of their vocational direction and commitment may also differ in performance and assess their experience in different ways.

Last, this paper will focus on the phenomenon of persistence. This is a complex issue and one of particular concern to educational administrators. Although we are aware of the influx of adult women into postsecondary education, we have not yet determined how many of these women actually obtain their degrees without interruption of their studies, or with intermittent interruptions, or, perhaps, not at all. The domain of work and family life are salient ones in the lives of adult women. Satisfaction with their experience in college and motivation to continue with higher education are likely to be influenced by both

personal characteristics and a woman student's ability to balance work and family life in a satisfactory manner.

In a pilot study (Caracelli, 1983), typologies were developed for two groups of reentry women who differed on motivational dimensions and expectations in returning to college. Women with focused career goals were classified as "Integrators". It was characteristic of these women to evaluate aspects of their past and current life experience in devising their career goals and they viewed college as providing a means to those ends. Women with unfocused career goals were classified as "Seekers". These women, although concerned about career issues, were less directed and not committed to specific career goals. They viewed college as a tool of exploration.

Interview responses indicated that Integrators were more likely to derive personal satisfaction from their jobs, more often expressed recognition of their own abilities, and had a greater sense of commitment to a particular career path than did Seekers. For Integrators the desire to be effective in "helping others" was an implicit criterion for career choice and their career goals related to the helping professions (e.g., counseling, social work); whereas criteria for career choice mentioned by Seekers fell more often under the rubrics of "autonomy" and "creative expression". For Seekers, tentative majors and general fields of endeavor were couched in terms of divergent possibilities. Feelings of being "in a waiting period", "marking time", "trying to leave things open" were expressed by most of these women. They were less likely than Integrators to mention pursuing studies on a graduate or professional level. When college services in program and career planning were mentioned by Seekers it was generally in terms of their desire to see someone who would help them clarify what direction would be best to pursue, what major they should choose; whereas, Integrators spoke of

having seen an advisor or the desire to see one in order to determine the specific course necessary to pursue their future goals, "the best means to an end". It appears that reentry women are not homogeneous in motivational dimensions and expectations. The identification of these two types of women who differ in career goal focus raises questions about other differences between these women that may of interest to counselors and educators. Following the pilot study, similar interviews were administered to a second cohort of women that addressed the same questions at the end of their first year of college. The questions guiding this study concern distinctions between women with focused and unfocused career goals.

Research questions

1. Are women with focused and unfocused career goals distinguishable on the basis of certain selected personality characteristics?
2. Do these women who differ along motivational dimensions differ in perceived self-concept initially and/or after their first year in college?
3. Do women with focused and unfocused career goals differ in terms of successful academic performance, satisfaction and persistence in college?

A fourth question was added during the data analysis phase:

4. Are nonpersisters distinguishable from persisters in life-style, or on the dimensions of personality, self-concept, and satisfaction?

Design and Method

A pre and posttest academic year longitudinal design was used to document the early transition experience of adult women entering or returning to college. Since the questions to be explored do not address distinctions between college and non-college women, no control sample was obtained. Rather, the questions guiding the study concern changes from pre to posttest among women who return to college as well as ferreting out distinctions among subcategories of women within

the sample. Longitudinal research, best suited for examining a time of transition, builds in a before-after design in which each woman can serve as her own control.

Sample

Two cohorts of volunteer subjects were recruited from Fordham University's EXCEL program at the summer orientation sessions held in 1981 and 1982. the EXCEL program is a "special entry program for adults, leading to a B.A. degree". The establishment of this program in 1970, with its interdisciplinary focus and credit for life experience, represented a major effort on the part of the University to adapt their traditional liberal arts programs to the needs of adult students by providing a bridge-program to college. The two samples (34 women who entered EXCEL in 1981 and 36 women who entered in 1982) were merged since there were no significant differences between the cohorts on any of the major demographic variables or outcome variables of interest.

The combined sample of 70 women is fairly representative of entering classes: mean age 34, 30% minority women, majority attending evening classes. Slightly over one-third of the women had received credit for previous college courses (a criterion for sample selection set the limit of transfer credits at 25). Most of these women were in the labor force (77%) or intended to resume employment. Forty percent of the women lived with a spouse or mate and of these about one-third had children at home. Single mothers with children at home were approximately 16% of the sample. The remaining women were independent (without mate or children). (See Table 1)

Attrition

Nine participants were lost to the study by the end of their first year in college. One woman could not to be located and two moved out of state. Five women withdrew during or after their first semester and were not planning to continue their education for the time being. One of these women found it difficult to manage parenting responsibilities while in college. Another woman, a single parent, cited "serious problems" at home. Two single women withdrew due to "excessive work commitments" and "desire to travel" respectively. Another woman left school to work with her mate in establishing a new business. The remaining woman completed her first year and planned to transfer to a college closer to her home because of changing circumstances in her personal life: remarriage and pregnancy. The remaining 61 women continued in the follow-up phase of data collection regardless of whether they completed their first year in college.

Measures

Interview:

All women were interviewed prior to enrollment (1981-1982). The interview examined family and career trajectories and included questions concerning college and career objectives. Questions about college expectations and experience were addressed in a follow-up interview at the end of the first year of college (1982-1983). Most interviews were conducted at Fordham University; however, interviews also took place at the home or workplace of the participants if necessary. On the average interviews were 1 1/2 to 2 hours in length. The University's records were examined to obtain a measure of achievement (GPA) and persistence over a three year period. The following instruments were also

completed by participants prior to college entrance and/or at the end of their first year in college.

California Q-set: (J. Block, 1961, modified by Bem & Funder, 1978)

This instrument was given to participants at both points of data collection to obtain a broad range of personality characteristics and to serve as a means of describing subgroups within the sample. The Q-set contains 100 descriptive personality statements (e.g., "has high aspiration level for self", "genuinely values intellectual and cognitive matters", etc.). Using a forced symmetric distribution each woman sorts the cards into 9 categories ranging from those least to most characteristic of her personality. Thus each item receives a score of 1 to 9, and the distribution has a mean of 5 and a standard deviation of 2.[1]

Tennessee Self Concept Scale: (TSCS) (Fitts, 1965)

The return to college involved a role transition that seemed likely to affect the self concept of these reentry women. A pre and posttest were given to participants to examine changes in self concept that may have occurred during their first year of college. The TSCS contains 100 self descriptive statements that measure self concept across five general areas: physical self, moral-ethical self, personal self, family self, and social self. Each area is subdivided into statements on identity, self acceptance, and behavior. Test-retest reliability for the normed sample over two weeks on the overall self-esteem score was .90. Fitts (1965) cites a number of studies that indicate the scale has convergent, construct, and predictive validity.

College Transition Inventory:

At the end of the school year women responded to the following statements about how well the college experience matched their initial hopes.

1. gave me an opportunity to meet people who shared interests similar to mine
2. was an aid to job advancement or promotion
3. was a facilitator in planning for career change
4. provided me with knowledge in substantive areas
5. gave me a chance to exchange ideas with professors
6. helped me develop analytic and expressive skills
7. was an opportunity for personal growth

The response choices were: was disappointing, not important to me, was adequate, exceeded my expectations.

Women also rated on a Likert-type scale how satisfied they were with the following aspects of their college experience (range: (1) extremely dissatisfied to (6) extremely satisfied).

a. with the match between your own natural learning style and the style of instruction?
b. with your overall experience in college? (How well does it meet your expectations, needs, help you achieve your goals etc.)
c. with the teaching & academic guidance provided by faculty members?
d. with your success as a student in the program?
e. with your sense of personal growth and fulfillment?

Career Goal Classification

On the basis of the earlier pilot study, women in the combined cohort sample were classified at the end of the first year of college according to career goal focus. Also, the definition for Seekers was broadened to include those women who had no immediate career agenda. Throughout the remainder of this report, women with focused career goals will be referred to as "Integrators" and those with unfocused career goals will be referred to as "Seekers". For approximately 84% of the 61 interviews, research assistants were enlisted to secure reliability. The percent of agreement was 85.2. Disagreements were resolved

through mutual consent or were referred to a third coder. This classification divided the sample into 29 Integrators and 32 Seekers.

Results

Each of the women participants, although they were from varied backgrounds and different life-styles, arrived at the same crossroad in her personal decision to resume her education. Demographically the Integrators and Seekers did not differ significantly on age, race, marital status, living situation, or employment. With regard to parenting status, however, "Integrators" were more than twice as likely to have children at home.

Personality profile: Integrators and Seekers

Although these women differed motivationally in career goal focus and in their expectations of how college could serve to actualize their vocational decisions, the personality profiles of "Integrators" and "Seekers" were surprisingly similar. As displayed in Table 2, in the "most characteristic" category Integrators and Seekers describe themselves as dependable, responsible, and productive. On a cognitive level they perceive themselves as having a high degree of intellectual capacity. On an interpersonal level they feel they respond to humor, are warm, compassionate, and sensuous. There is agreement among these women that it is "least characteristic" of themselves to be deceitful, manipulative, or to create and exploit dependency in others. In their response to life's vicissitudes they do not see themselves as emotionally bland or self-pitying. Although they are unlikely to push or stretch limits they also do not see themselves as giving up or withdrawing in the face of frustration or adversity. These women strike a balance in valuing interpersonal and instrumental aspects of their life and reveal their own perceptions of inner strength in meeting challenges such as the one posed by their recent transition.

The Q-items on which they differed by at least two salience categories are listed in Table 3. Though few in number, the items do have import for a transition of this nature. Relatively, it was more characteristic of Integrators than Seekers to feel they had a high degree of intellectual capacity. Integrators also perceived themselves as more productive and able to get things accomplished. They were less likely than Seekers to perceive themselves as reluctant to commit themselves to a definite course of action. These reported differences would appear to give Integrators an advantage in a college environment.

Self concept:

It was anticipated that in a transition of this nature, changes in self concept might occur as these women confronted the demands and expectations inherent in their new student role. In fact, an earlier content analysis of the year end interviews with the first cohort of reentry women (n=26) indicated this was the case. The majority of women (76%) reported changes in their feelings about themselves. Of those women, 37% talked about their feelings of pride and their sense of accomplishment. Some women (21%) described changes in terms of an increase in self-esteem and self-worth. Other women (37%) spoke of their experience in a more abstract way as one that had given them a sense of "personal growth", "fulfillment", feelings of "inner happiness" or having become "a better person". Most women (58%) talked about a gain in self-confidence and new recognition of their capabilities.

To test changes in self concept on the combined sample, the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) was given to participants at college entrance and again at the end of the first year of study. The following subscales of the TSCS were selected for analysis because of their apparent relevance for women making this

transition: self-esteem, identity, self-satisfaction, behavior, personal self, family self, and social self.

Change in the components of self concept were evident for women identified as Integrators and Seekers. Table 4, which reports the pre and posttest means on the subscale scores of the TSCS, illustrates that the two groups were different at the time of college entrance and that Integrators had higher mean scores on each of the subscales. The initial differences in self concept were controlled for in an Analysis of Covariance when scores for the career goal groups on the TSCS given at the end of their first year in college were examined. The results show significant differences at the .05 level between Integrators and Seekers on the self-esteem, identity, personal self and social self subscales, with significant differences at the .10 level on self-satisfaction and behavior. During the first year of transition the gap widens between these two groups, as mean scores on each of these subscales drop for Seekers and increase for Integrators. In contrast to "Seekers", by the end of their first year in college "Integrators" perceive enhanced self-esteem, a firmer sense of identity, greater feelings of adequacy, personal worth, and improved relationships with others. On the average they are also more satisfied with themselves. Although we cannot attribute these changes to the college experience per se, it does appear that Seekers experience a more difficult year of transition.

It is evident that in the evaluative aspects of how reentry women perceive themselves during the early stage of the transition to college, "Integrators" (those with focused career goals) appear more self-assured. These differences give rise naturally to questions about whether Integrators and Seekers differ in

relation to certain aspects of their college experience. For example, do women with focused and unfocused career goals differ in terms of successful performance, satisfaction, and persistence in college? These issues of concern to counselors and educators will be examined in turn.

Academic Performance

Acceptance in Fordham's EXCEL Program depends, in part, on a qualifying entrance exam in which vocabulary and reading comprehension are tested. There were no significant differences in aptitude between Integrators and Seekers in their college entrance exam scores or in the number of course credits taken during the academic year. The academic performance of Integrators and Seekers was compared by examining the grade point averages (GPA) of both groups over a two year period. As reported in Table 5, the mean GPA scores indicate above average performance for women in both groups over a two year period (grade range: B+ for Integrators, B for Seekers). Integrators were more successful academically than Seekers at the end of the first year of college. This difference was apparent even when the career goal classifications for women prior to college entrance were compared on end of first year GPA's [$t(49 d.f.) = -2.21$, $p < .03$]. By the end of the second year the groups were slightly less discrepant on the GPA performance measure. Perhaps the goal directedness and professional aspirations of Integrators, along with the greater self-esteem and perceptions of high intellectual capacity they enjoy, give these women a performance edge over Seekers. Later, as experience in college confirms their aptitude to meet coursework demands, the performance of Seekers improve.

Satisfaction in College:

In interviews at the end of their first year most women expressed a positive attitude about their experience in college. Four quotes capture the flavor of these statements.

> I think it really surpassed my expectations. I thought that it would be a lot drier than it was. I think that it is very interesting, coming back to school at 31 rather than going to school at 21, because the things that I am learning now coupled with the life experience that I have had the last ten years have a deeper meaning for me.
>
> (Maureen, age 32)

> My mind had to expand. I had to really get out of the 'Ho Hum' syndrome, and get into stretching my imagination and my mind. It was just getting away from that narrow tunnel vision that I had been a part of for so long. That I think was the exciting part.
>
> (Lucille, age 40)

> ...my brain, I realize its potential so much more now that it has been exercised a little. That, that is what is going to give me what I have wanted and have been looking for in so many ways.
>
> (Martha, age 25)

> ...the learning, the actual physical learning about things I have always wanted to read but never have...when I got a glimmer of understanding about things like ionic bonds, I was fascinated...there is so much. I can't get over how much there is. How much I was missing from my life.
>
> (Virginia, age 31)

The College Transition Inventory corroborated the interview statements. The seven questions that concerned the match between expectations and experience were combined for an overall index score. The same procedure was followed for the six questions relating to satisfaction and resulted in an overall satisfaction index score. The composite items of each index are listed in Table 6. A review of the mean scores indicates relatively high satisfaction on all items, but in particular the item on each index that related to personal growth. When women responded to the CTI question "Which is more important at this point

in your life?", 34.8% chose personal development goals, 7.6% chose work and career goals, while most women chose work and personal goals as equally important (57.6%).

The women were, in part, motivated to attend college for vocational reasons. The two groups differed on the basis of their degree of focus toward specific professional goals. The personality descriptions, although overlapping, did point out attributes on which these women could be distinguished. Self concept differences between Integrators and Seekers were apparent. It seemed likely that these two types of reentry women would experience the transition to college in ways that could result in differences in their satisfaction with their experience in college.

With one exception, t-test comparisons of Integrators and Seekers on the items included in the indices of "College Experience vs Expectations" and "Satisfaction with College" showed no significant differences between the groups. Even when the satisfaction index was divided at the median to create a high satisfaction variable, no group differences were obtained. Since Integrators and Seekers did differ on their end of first year GPA's, we can assume that the satisfaction measure took more into account than satisfaction with academic performance. Apparently, the expectations both groups held prior to college entrance were met. Even though these women differed in orientation, their sources of satisfaction with various aspects of college experience were quite similar.

Persistence:

The more clearly defined vocational aspirations of Integrators seemed likely to lead to greater persistence. To determine whether this was the case, a persistence ratio was constructed by dividing semesters completed by six

semesters, the number of semesters for the three year period these women were followed. Seekers were less likely to persist (13 vs 9). However, t-test comparisons between the groups on the persistence ratio measure indicated this difference was not significant. Even in the earlier phases of college experience differences between the groups were not pronounced. Women who did not remain in the study were fairly evenly distributed in term of career goal classification (4 Integrators, 5 Seekers). Among the eight women who did not continue into their second year of college (3 Integrators, 5 Seekers) group differences were also not significant. It appears that in this initial phase of transition the needs of both groups were met equally well.

Figure 1 gives the percentage of persistence for the sample as a whole. Slightly less than half of the 61 women who continued participation in the study were able to complete six terms without at least one term of interruption. Thirty-six percent of these women (n=22) withdrew by the equivalent of the end of their second year. The life-styles and living arrangements of these reentry women were varied. All women had to maintain preexisting personal responsibilities to themselves and others while adapting to their roles as students. Both satisfaction with the experience in college and motivation to continue with higher education are likely to be influenced by a woman's ability to balance work and family life in a satisfactory manner.

Persisters vs nonpersisters:

Persistence is of interest and concern to both counselors and educational administrators. The distinctions between Integrators and Seekers do little to shed light on this important phenomenon. However, an opportunity was available to begin an exploratory analysis by comparing persisters and nonpersisters along the same dimensions that were used to compare Integrators and Seekers.

A demographic comparison of women who withdrew from college by the end of their first year with those who persisted [14 (including attrition) vs 56] did not reveal any significant differences on any single characteristic (i.e. age, race, marital status, parenting status, living situation, and employment). Also, taking each demographic characteristic separately there were no significant differences on the persistence ratio measure for women with or without a mate, with or without children at home, living independently or with others. The percentage of semesters completed did differ with regard to employment. As expected, women who were not employed were less likely to interrupt their studies [$t(59\text{d.f.})=2.04$, $p<.04$]. There was also a trend for race, with minority women more likely to stop out [$t(59\text{d.f.})=-1.83$, $p<.07$].

This preliminary level of analysis does not allow us to determine the clusters of conditions that more than likely influence persistence. The previously mentioned study that examined data on the first cohort of reentry women points to areas that deserve further inquiry. Twenty of these women cited difficulties, often multidimensional, stemming from trying to balance work and personal life during the transition to college. Three of the 10 women who mentioned physical illness (either self or family member) were unable to complete their second terms. Other difficulties perceived as affecting this role transition were (a) energy depletion (40%), e.g., chronic disabilities, work transitions, or absorptive jobs, (b) changes in life-style or living arrangements (30%), e.g. temporary stop-out from the labor force, or personal transitions (dissolution of marriage, cohabiting with a mate, return of a child to the family nest), (c) financial burdens (25%), (d) unsupportive male companions (15%), (e) family responsibilities (5%).

The multidimensional aspects of the lives of reentry women make the task of examining persistence for this special population complex. Eight women stopped out during or after their first year in college, and although they did not resume their studies in the fall, they continued participation in the research project. These women afford us an opportunity to take a closer look at nonpersisters. The principal reasons for interrupting their studies were the following: three women cited financial reasons, two women felt job transitions would interfere, one woman planned to assist her spouse in a business venture, another woman mentioned family illness and her own lack of motivation. The remaining woman experienced college as a source of stress and anxiety.

The college entrance exam scores indicated these women differed significantly from persisters on vocabulary [$t(59\text{d.f.})=2.35$, $p<.02$] and on comprehension [$t(59\text{d.f.})=2.66$, $p<.01$]. Since only one of these women completed the full school year, it was not possible to compare those who stopped out with women who continued their studies on the academic performance measure (GPA). Their ratings on the items that make up the "Satisfaction with College" index indicated that on the average these women were satisfied with their experience in college. However, there was a trend toward significance for these women to be less satisfied than women who did not interrupt their studies [$t(58\text{d.f.})=1.83$, $p<.07$]. This expected outcome lends support for the validity of the satisfaction measure.

It was anticipated that there would have been self reported differences in self concept, but none were obtained on any of the subscales of the TSCS on which persisters and nonpersisters were compared. Of interest, however, is the way nonpersisters described themselves when they sorted the Q-items that were characteristic and uncharacteristic of their basic personality. The Q-items

listed in Table 7 compare the eight women who withdrew from college during or after their first year of study with those who continued. A number of contrasts appear to have relevance for a transition of this nature.

These nonpersisters are less likely to be aesthetically reactive, to have high aspirations for themselves, to value intellectual matters, or to be ethically consistent. They also have more of a tendency to be concerned with their own adequacy as a person and to be uncomfortable with uncertainty and complexities. In contrast to persisters they are less likely to be talkative, instead emphasizing communication through actions and nonverbal behavior. Although the nonpersisters see themselves as attractive, expressive, cheerful, and giving toward others in their interpersonal relationships, they also appear more passive than persisters. They are less likely to perceive themselves as power oriented, as varying their roles, and more likely to feel they are submissive and emotionally bland. Compared to persisters they are likely to perceive themselves as self-indulgent, unable to delay gratification, and as giving up and withdrawing in the face of frustration and adversity. It must be noted that, on the average, both groups rate these items as uncharacteristic.

Although generalizations about nonpersisters would be inappropriate because of the small sample size. These women do appear unlikely to complete a degree program. They enter college with lower aptitude scores than their counterparts. They are, therefore, initially at a disadvantage. The women themselves cite various life events as reasons for stopping out. The personality profiles of these women, compared to persisters, reveal less academic motivation and a general mode of response to adverse conditions that may warrant targeted intervention strategies on the part of college counseling services.

Conclusions:

Many women who first opt for the role of wife or mother view the return to college as an initial investment in a new career. Some women who may have anticipated those roles may have delayed pursuing any professional commitment. Still others may be planning to incorporate the roles of spouse and mother while simultaneously preparing for a career, recognizing that in the future they will more than likely be balancing both work and family roles. Regardless of the processes that lead women to make different choices in early adulthood, the decisions themselves may have long term consequences. Choices appropriate at one stage of life may be inappropriate later. Beginning or returning to college may be one way in which women attempt to build a new life structure that can serve current or emerging developmental tasks.

The women students interviewed at Fordham appear similar to other adult returnees cited in the literature in having chosen to redirect their lives and in being committed to education for personal development and vocational goals. The study is limited in its consideration of a small sample of women in a liberal arts, reentry program for adults in a private, urban university. Their experiences may differ from adult women who enter other types of colleges or universities, especially in cases where special reentry programs are not available.

The findings of this study, however, do have utility for those involved in devising educational policy and programs for adults. Nontraditional students cannot be considered simplistically as a homogeneous population with special but similar needs. The identification of subgroups within this sample of reentry women points out that advisory and counseling needs will differ for women with

focused and unfocused career goals. Both their expectations and needs in terms of program planning during this initial phase of college stand apart. It should be noted that there is a continuum within each of the typologies created for descriptive purposes. Although some "Seekers" were undirected and totally open to avenues of exploration, others had criteria that would eventually need to be incorporated into their choice of fields that now appeared broad-based. For the most part, these women had a "let's wait and see" attitude. Women who were described as "Integrators" ranged from having specific professional goals, e.g., lawyer, child psychologist, to having delineated a specific field while leaving some room for exploration and clarification of goals from within that field, e.g., a helping profession.

The California Q-set personality measure revealed that both groups perceived themselves as having many attributes in common. However, some reported differences would appear to give "Integrators" an advantage in a college environment. For example, compared to "Seekers", they felt they had a higher degree of intellectual capacity, were more productive, and were not reluctant to commit themselves to a course of action. In addition, Integrators entered college with higher mean scores on each of the subscales of the Tennessee Self Concept measure. Even when initial differences between the groups are controlled for, the end of year scores indicate that in contrast to Seekers, Integrators enhance their self-esteem, have a firmer sense of identity, have greater feelings of adequacy and personal worth. They are more satisfied with themselves and also perceive improved relationships with others.

The academic performance for both groups over a two year period was above average. Integrators had a performance edge over Seekers at the end of the first year of college with significantly higher GPAs. With time and experience in

college, Seekers further improve and by the end of the second year the academic performance of both groups is less discrepant.

These reentry women were engaged in role transition, finding their way to incorporate the new demands and expectations that were required of them as adult learners in college while maintaining their preexisting network of formal and informal roles. For the most part, women felt satisfied with their first year college experience. A comparison of Integrators and Seekers on the items included in the indices of "College Experience vs Expectations" and "Satisfaction with College" did not yield any major differences in their responses. Both groups were satisfied with college but more than likely for different reasons. "Integrators" viewed their college experience as a means to pursue specific career goals and "Seekers" viewed their college experience as an opportunity for exploration in coming to define their future goals. Although the vocational needs of the groups differed, in this initial phase of their transition to college the needs of both groups were apparently met. This is further borne out by the failure to obtain differences between Integrators and Seekers on the persistence measure.

Nonetheless, less than half of the reentry women were able to complete three years of college without their studies being interrupted for at least one semester. Twenty percent (n=14) of these women withdrew during their first year. The ostensible reasons for interrupting studies given by eight of these women revealed concerns about finances, job transitions, and family issues. It is likely that nonpersistence is multidetermined. These women did appear to be at risk for successful completion of a degree program. One reason is that, in comparison to persisters, they are significantly lower in aptitude on their college entrance exam scores. Secondly, the personality profiles of these women

point to a lower threshold of endurance for stressful events and less academic motivation than their counterparts. It appears that intervention strategies on the part of college counseling services may be beneficial to such women.

It must also be noted that the women in this study entered a program designed for reentry women. Yet despite institutional support a number of women experienced difficulties in balancing their roles as worker/family member and student. Women who experienced the greatest difficulty either worked in absorptive occupations or had experienced work transitions, e.g., promotion, moving in and out of the labor force. These "transitions within a transition" seemed to result in cross-over effects that were experienced in the interface between work, school, and personal life. These effects were sometimes experienced as deficits in energy, physical illness, or mental preoccupation with financial or personal issues. Similarly, changes in life-style or living arrangements, again, "transitions within a transition" often created the need for additional coping methods. For some of these women the college experience served as a coping strategy in dealing with personal issues. For others the demands and expectations of the student role became an added stress.

In the first cohort satisfaction with college was significantly greater for women who were higher in their perceived satisfaction with support from friends, co-workers, and family members who sustained these reentry women through the initial transition period. It is probable that adult women who enter a college environment insensitive to the competing demands of adult life would fare less well.

It is clear that completing an undergraduate degree program requires a long-term commitment, especially for women who attend on a part-time basis. Colleges need to reciprocate with a commitment to determine the suitability of current college policies and organization for this population. The evaluation of existing programs and the design of new programs intended to meet the needs of adult women students are dependent on a full understanding of how the transition to college affects their lives.

1. Since no individual Q-sort could be considered a "prototype" of the reentry woman, there was a need to establish "Q-sort arrays" (see Block, 1961) that could best represent all women within the sample and within identified subgroups. These profiles or "Q-sort arrays" could then be compared and items distinguishing groups easily identified. Item means were calculated for the sample and/or groups within the sample. Then item means were re-Q'ed. For example, the 5 items with the highest mean were given scores of 9, the items with the eight next highest means received scores of 8, and so on throughout the Q-distribution. Tied items were assigned to the appropriate or next category on a random basis. The profiles or arrays are effectively made into Q-sorts through the conversion of the item means into a nine point score distribution.

   [9=most characteristic (5 items), 8=quite characteristic (8 items), 7=fairly characteristic (12 items), 6=somewhat characteristic (16 items), 5=neither characteristic nor uncharacteristic (18 items), 4=somewhat uncharacteristic (16 items), 3=fairly uncharacteristic (12 items), 2=quite uncharacteristic (8 items), 1=least characteristic (5 items)]

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APPENDIX A
BEM-MODIFIED BLOCK Q-SORT

1. Is critical, skeptical, not easily impressed.
2. Is a genuinely dependable and responsible person.
3. Has a wide range of interests.
4. Is a talkative individual.
5. Behaves in a giving way toward others.
6. Is fastidious.
7. Favors conservative values in a variety of areas.
8. Appears to have a high degree of intellectual capacity.
9. Is uncomfortable with uncertainty and complexities.
10. Anxiety and tension find outlet in bodily symptoms.
11. Is protective of those close to him or her.
12. Tends to be self-defensive.
13. Is thin-skinned; sensitive to anything that can be construed as criticism or an interpersonal slight.
14. Genuinely submissive; accepts domination comfortably.
15. Is skilled in social techniques of imaginative play, pretending, and humor.
16. Is introspective and concerned with self as an object.
17. Behaves in a sympathetic or considerate manner.
18. Initiates humor.
19. Seeks reassurance from others.
20. Has a rapid personal tempo; behaves and acts quickly.
21. Arouses nurturant feelings in others.
22. Feels a lack of personal meaning in life.
23. Extrapunitive; tends to transfer or project blame.
24. Prides self on being "objective," rational.
25. Tends toward over-control of needs and impulses; binds tensions excessively; delays gratification unnecessarily.
26. Is productive; gets things done.
27. Shows condescending behavior in relations with others.
28. Tends to arouse liking and acceptance in people.
29. Is turned to for advice and reassurance.
30. Gives up and withdraws where possible in the face of frustration and adversity.
31. Regards self as physically attractive.
32. Seems to be aware of the impression he or she makes on others.
33. Is calm, relaxed in manner.
34. Over-reactive to minor frustrations; irritable.
35. Has warmth; has the capacity for close relationships; compassionate.
36. Is subtly negativistic; tends to undermine and obstruct or sabotage.
37. Is guileful and deceitful, manipulative, opportunistic.
38. Has hostility toward others.
39. Thinks and associates ideas in unusual ways; has unconventional thought processes.
40. In vulnerable to real or fancied threat; generally fearful.
41. Is moralistic.
42. Reluctant to commit self to any definite course of action; tends to delay or avoid action.
43. Is facially and/or gesturally expressive.
44. Evaluates the motivation of others in interpreting situations.
45. Brittle ego-defense system; small reserve of integration; would be disorganized, maladaptive under stress or trauma.

46. Engages in personal fantasy and daydreams, fictional speculations.
47. Has readiness to feel guilt.
48. Keeps people at a distance; avoids close interpersonal relationships.
49. Is basically distrustful of people in general; questions their motivations
50. Is unpredictable and changeable in behavior and attitudes.
51. Genuinely values intellectual and cognitive matters.
52. Behaves in an assertive fashion.
53. Various needs tend toward relatively direct and uncontrolled expression. Unable to delay gratification.
54. Emphasizes being with others; gregarious.
55. Is self-defeating.
56. Responds to humor.
57. Is an interesting, arresting person.
58. Enjoys sensuous experiences--including touch, taste, smell, physical contact.
59. Is concerned with own body and the adequacy of its physiological functioning.
60. Has insight into own motives and behavior.
61. Creates and exploits dependency in people.
62. Tends to be rebellious and non-conforming.
63. Judges self and others in conventional terms like "popularity,""the correct thing to do," social pressures, etc.
64. Is socially perceptive of a wide range of interpersonal cues.
65. Characteristically pushes and tries to stretch limits; sees what he/she can get away with.
66. Enjoys aesthetic impressions; is aesthetically reactive.
67. Is self-indulgent.
68. Is basically anxious.
69. Is sensitive to anything that can be construed as a demand.
70. Behaves in an ethically consistent manner; is consistent with own personal standards.
71. Has high aspiration level for self.
72. Concerned with own adequacy as a person, either at conscious or unconscious levels.
73. Tends to perceive many different contexts in sexual terms; eroticizes situations.
74. Is subjectively unaware of self-concern; feels satisfied with self.
75. Has a clear-cut, internally consistent personality.
76. Tends to project his/her own feelings and motivations onto others.
77. Appears straightforward, forthright, candid in dealing with others.
78. Feels cheated and victimized by life; self-pitying.
79. Tends to ruminate and have persistent, pre-occupying thoughts.
80. Interested in members of the opposite sex.
81. Is physically attractive; good-looking.
82. Has fluctuating moods.
83. Able to see to the heart of important problems.
84. Is cheerful.
85. Emphasizes communication through action and nonverbal behavior.
86. Handles anxiety and conflicts by refusing to recognize their presence; repressive or dissociative tendencies.
87. Interprets basically simple and clearcut situations in complicated and particularizing ways.

88. Is personally charming.
89. Compares self to others. Is alert to real or fancied differences between self and other people.
90. Is concerned with philosophical problems; E.G., Religions, values the meaning of life, etc.
91. Is power oriented; values power in self and others.
92. Has social poise and presence; appears socially at ease.
93. A.(if male) Behaves in a masculine style and manner. 93B. (if female) Behaves in a feminine style and manner.
94. Expresses hostile feelings directly.
95. Tends to proffer advice.
96. Values own independence and autonomy.
97. Is emotionally bland; has flattened affect.
98. Is verbally fluent; can express ideas well.
99. Is self-dramatizing; histrionic.
100. Does not vary roles; relates to everyone in the same way.

Table 1

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS AT COLLEGE ENTRANCE

Demographic Characteristics: n=70

	mean	range
Age	34.47	22-55

	percent	number
Minority Women	30	21
Employed Women	77.1	54
Women with Mate only	27.1	19
Women with Mate & Children at Home	12.8	9
Single Parent with Children at Home	15.7	11
Women Without Mate or Children	44.2	31

Table 2

Q-items Rated Most & Least Characteristic of Integrators and Seekers*

n=50

Most Characteristic	mean	sd	Least Characteristic	mean	sd
Q 2. dependable, responsible	7.60	1.37	Q37. deceitful,manipulative	2.06	1.06
Q35. warm, compassionate	7.42	1.34	Q61. creates,exploits dependency	2.08	1.05
Q96. values independence, autonomy	7.36	1.41	Q78. self-pitying	2.38	1.43
Q56. responds to humor	7.08	1.37	Q97. emotionally bland	2.50	1.40
Q58. sensuous	7.06	1.37	Q30. withdraws when frustrated	3.10	1.40
Q26. productive	6.76	1.78	Q65. stretches limits	3.06	1.62
Q 8. high intellectual capacity	6.70	1.30			

* For complete Q-item phrase see Appendix A

Table 3

Q-items for which Integrator and Seeker Composites Differ by at Least Two Categories

	Integrators n=25		Seekers n=25	
	mean	sd	mean	sd
Q-items More Characteristic of Integrators				
Q26. productive, gets things done	7.12	1.45	6.40	2.02
Q 8. high intellectual capacity	6.96	1.37	6.44	1.19
Q 5. giving toward others	6.76	1.54	6.20	1.66
Q63. conventional	4.08	1.41	3.28	1.81
Q65. stretches limits	3.72	1.74	2.48	1.58*
Q-items More Characteristic of Seekers				
Q18. Initiates humor	5.68	1.91	6.80	1.73*
Q42. reluctant to act	3.04	1.43	4.32	1.86*

*$p < .05$

Table 4

Pre and Posttest Mean Scores on subscales of the TSCS

Subscales		Integrators n=26		Seekers n=26		F	p
		mean	sd	mean	sd		
Self-Esteem	pretest	348.81	27.89	340.73	31.67		
	posttest	356.50	30.27	336.73	33.71	6.87	.02*
Identity	pretest	126.08	9.91	123.88	9.87		
	posttest	128.50	11.53	120.88	12.61	6.89	.02*
Self-Satisfaction	pretest	111.15	10.98	108.62	14.99		
	posttest	112.69	10.52	106.77	14.94	2.85	.10
Behavior	pretest	111.58	10.68	108.23	9.74		
	posttest	115.31	11.82	109.07	10.33	3.26	.08
Personal Self	pretest	64.92	6.22	64.35	7.78		
	posttest	66.88	5.95	63.65	8.45	4.43	.04*
Family Self	pretest	70.96	7.03	67.31	8.08		
	posttest	70.62	10.71	65.85	7.93	.77	.38
Social Self	pretest	70.54	9.06	68.62	8.25		
	posttest	72.81	9.27	66.73	9.75	9.13	.01**

These differences were tested in an Analysis of Covariance controlling for pretest score.

* $p<.05$
** $p<.01$

Table 5

GPA: T-Test Comparison of Integrators and Seekers

1982

	INTEGRATORS n=27		SEEKERS n=26		
	mean	sd	mean	sd	
	3.56	.52	3.26	.51	t(51d.f.)= -2.10, p<.04*

1983

	INTEGRATORS n=24		SEEKERS n=24		
	mean	sd	mean	sd	
	3.50	.61	3.29	.54	t(46d.f.)= -1.28, p<.20

Table 6

COLLEGE EXPERIENCE VS EXPECTATIONS TRANSITION INDEX

Item Means and Standard Deviations for Integrators and Seekers

	Integrators n=26		Seekers n=26		
	mean	sd	mean	sd	
1. Opportunity to meet people who shared similar interests.	3.58	1.23	3.81	1.36	
2. Aid to job advancement or promotion.	3.15	1.19	3.07	.93	
3. Facilitator in planning for career change.	3.46	.81	3.35	1.13	
4. Knowledge in substantive areas.	4.35	.85	4.42	.38	
5. Chance to exchange ideas with professors.	3.54	1.36	3.96	1.21	
6. Helped develop analytic or expressive skills.	3.65	1.20	4.27	.60	*
7. Opportunity for personal growth.	4.31	.84	4.54	.51	

coefficient alpha= .74 * $p<.05$

SATISFACTION WITH COLLEGE TRANSITION INDEX

Item Means and Standard Deviations for Integrators and Seekers

1. Match between learning style and instruction.	4.88	1.19	4.96	1.03
2. Overall experience in college.	4.65	1.20	5.04	1.11
3. Teaching and academic guidance.	4.65	1.29	4.88	1.03
4. Success as a student.	5.38	1.08	5.00	.94
5. Rapport among students.	4.73	1.08	5.19	.98

coefficient alpha= .89

Table 7

Q-items for Which Persisters and Nonpersisters Differ by Two or More Categories At the End of the First Year of College

		Persisters n=50		Nonpersisters n=8	
		mean	sd	mean	sd
Nonpersisters Higher					
Q 5.	giving towards others	6.48	1.54	7.00	1.41*
Q84.	cheerful	6.30	1.39	7.00	1.69
Q43.	expressive	6.64	1.43	6.88	2.10
Q72.	concerned with adequacy	6.10	1.73	7.75	1.58
Q31.	sees self as attractive	5.54	1.69	6.50	1.60
Q 9.	dislikes uncertainty	4.50	1.66	5.88	1.73*
Q85.	nonverbal communicator	4.60	1.81	5.63	2.00
Q67.	self-indulgent	3.88	1.71	5.50	1.60**
Q53.	undercontrolled	3.50	1.22	5.13	1.46**
Q30.	withdraws when frustrated	3.06	1.62	4.63	2.00**
Q14.	submissive	2.84	1.89	4.63	2.50*
Q97.	emotionally bland	2.50	1.40	4.00	1.93**
Persisters Higher					
Q58.	sensuous	7.06	1.15	5.88	2.42
Q66.	aesthetically reactive	6.86	1.57	5.13	2.17**
Q71.	high aspirations	6.86	1.83	4.75	1.75**
Q51.	values intellectual matters	6.74	1.51	5.50	1.41*
Q70.	ethically consistent	6.48	1.19	5.25	2.19
Q46.	engages in fantasy	5.56	1.66	4.38	2.83
Q 4.	talkative	5.42	1.63	4.38	2.00
Q19.	seeks reassurance	5.42	1.81	4.50	1.07
Q10.	somaticizes	5.32	1.71	4.25	2.12
Q99.	self-dramatizing	4.48	1.68	2.88	1.25**
Q91.	power oriented	4.12	1.94	3.38	1.92
100.	does not vary roles	3.88	1.53	2.88	2.17

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

Number of Semesters Completed over 3 Years

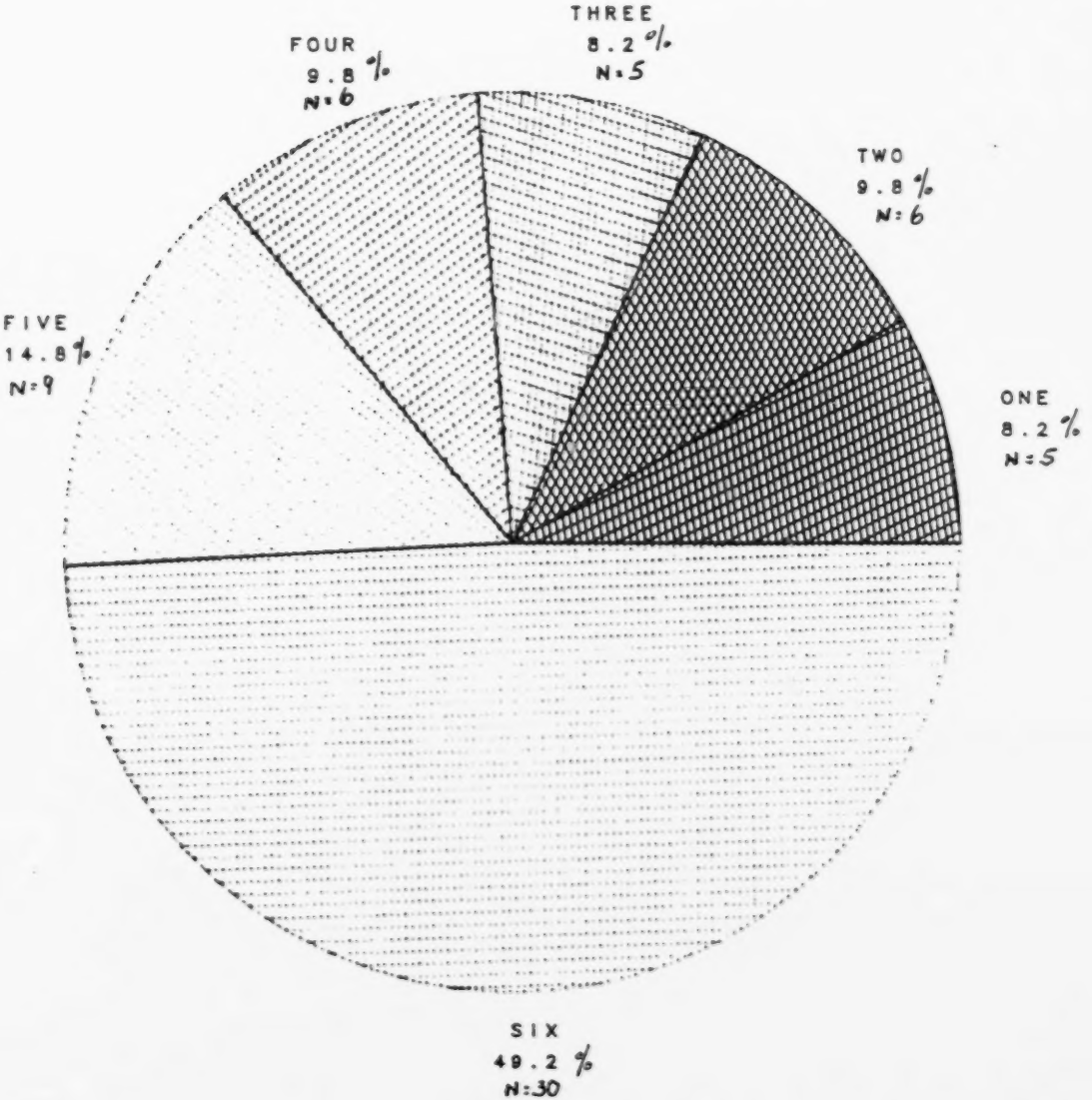

Figure 1

N=61